



# Living Memories

*Reflections of Students Volunteering in VA Hospitals*





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*Reflections of Students Volunteering in VA Hospitals*

*Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Office  
and  
United Students for Veterans' Health*



# Foreword

*The evolution of health care and the expanding VA health care system have provided increased opportunities for American citizens looking for ways to serve veterans by sharing their knowledge, skills and creative talents. The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program (VAVS) provides a valuable resource for dedicated volunteers interested in helping others. The VAVS Program has attracted a growing corps of dedicated volunteers with an increased capacity to meet the changing needs of veterans.*

*Established in 1946 with eight charter members, the VAVS Program today is comprised of 61 national veterans, civic and service organizations. As the largest volunteer program in the Federal government, the VAVS Program is sustained by the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of a diverse group of volunteers. These volunteers serve in VA health care facilities, home-based programs, nursing homes, veteran outreach centers and in VA national cemeteries. Collectively, these dedicated volunteers have contributed more than 521 million hours of volunteer service since the program's inception.*

*The numbers only tell part of the story. The level of caring and unshakable devotion to helping others that is demonstrated daily by VAVS volunteers is immeasurable. Without their assistance, the quality of services and programs designed to enhance patient care would be greatly compromised.*

*We are particularly interested in increasing volunteer participation by young adults throughout the country. VAVS has great opportunities to offer the leaders of tomorrow not only through the experiences of the actual volunteer activity, but also through the development of relationships with a group of very special people, our nation's heroes.*

*The stories shared in the pages to follow are compelling. They depict the value of service provided to the veteran and to the individual volunteer. Students have realized that the volunteer experience is more than just gaining additional skills or enhancing existing ones, they also fulfill a need in someone's life. They have realized that they can make a difference and that difference can be everlasting. The lives of many of the student volunteers are much more enriched and will never be the same, nor will the veterans' lives they have touched. Our congratulations to United Students for Veterans' Health for their efforts to collect these remarkable stories and for their continued service to veterans in VA medical centers.*

*VA is committed to providing these life-changing opportunities to individuals of all ages. Every day is Veterans Day for the volunteers who, in the true spirit of community service, unite in their efforts to help veterans and promote the recognition and honor they all deserve.*

*Jim W. Delgado  
Director, Voluntary Service Office  
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<b>Introduction</b>	<i>Vance Vanier</i>	<b>2</b>
<b>My Fridays With Ann</b>	<i>Bobby Daly</i>	<b>4</b>
<b>He Could Have Been My Father</b>	<i>Nicole Cushman</i>	<b>8</b>
<b>Simple Advice</b>	<i>Jason Hom</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>A Great Gift Lives On</b>	<i>Kenneth Gundle</i>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Wall</b>	<i>Kati Willoughby</i>	<b>18</b>
<b>Reflections of a Hero</b>	<i>Andre Vanier</i>	<b>21</b>
<b>Real People</b>	<i>Manisha Bahl</i>	<b>27</b>
<b>Anything but Routine</b>	<i>Matt Bricker</i>	<b>30</b>
<b>A Link to the World</b>	<i>Larisa Speetzen</i>	<b>35</b>
<b>Unexpected Gratitude</b>	<i>Jackie Hoang</i>	<b>41</b>
<b>Eddie</b>	<i>Sarita Patil</i>	<b>44</b>
<b>Still Life</b>	<i>Trevor Sutton</i>	<b>48</b>
<b>Afterword</b>	<i>Larisa Speetzen</i>	<b>54</b>

*I remember some time ago I visited a very wonderful home for old people. There were about forty people there and they had everything, but they were all looking toward the door. There was not a smile on their faces, and I asked the sister in charge of them, "Sister, why are all these people not smiling? Why are they looking towards the door?" And she, very beautifully had to answer and give the truth: "It's the same every day. They are longing for someone to come and visit them."*

Mother Theresa

# Introduction

In the spring of 1994, a small group of college students from Stanford University opened the door of the Menlo Park VA Hospital's Geriatric Unit and irrevocably changed the course of many lives. Each week these students would visit the elderly patients and spend several hours socializing and engaging in activities. Gradually this small group of student volunteers grew in size until the veteran patients could expect to be visited almost every day. Calling themselves, The United Students for Veterans' Health, these students declared this vision:

*We live in an age where the elderly and veterans of our nation are increasingly ignored or forgotten. As memories fade away, the past generations who have contributed to our welfare suffer from society's indifference. The responsibilities you are undertaking will reverse this tide... the example of your actions and deeds will reforge the bond between the young and the old.*

Nine years have followed since this initial group of students sought to reforge the bond between the young and the old. It is a bond that has grown stronger with each passing year. More than a thousand students in the years since have visited VA Hospitals throughout the United States. Students and veterans have formed friendships and gifted each other comfort, inspiration, and insights that have changed their lives forever.

The stories that follow here have been written by student volunteers and provide a precious glimpse into their relationships with veterans. These glimpses range from descriptions of a patient enlivening a dance, the simple joy of holding a hand, the drama of a war account read live by a participant, a veteran asking to help with schoolwork, expressions of religious faith, and countless other special moments. The photos that follow illustrate the landscapes of various VA Hospitals and provide the backdrop in which these volunteer encounters take place.

We hope that the accounts shared here will inspire you to seek similar experiences. The opening of a door to visit the lonely immeasurably enriches both the visited and the visitor. The bond between the young and the old is priceless both to those who share in it as well as the society in which it is fostered.

*Vance K. Vanier, M.D.*

*Founder, United Students for Veterans' Health*



*Blooms*

# My Fridays With Ann

*Bobby Daly*

*"It was as if Ginger Rogers herself had walked through the door"*

When I arrived at college, I imagined I would connect most easily with the other students living in my residence hall. I certainly had no idea that I would soon count a woman in her eighties living in the nearby veterans hospital among my good college friends. Life can surprise you, however. And sometimes it surprises in wonderful ways. My friendship with a patient named Ann is a good example of how the greatest joys in life are often the most unexpected.

I met Ann during my sophomore year in college, when I volunteered in a local Veterans Administration Hospital. She was a former nurse who was a patient in the VA system for over ten years. At a plastic table, with Judge Judy scolding in the background, Ann and I visited every Friday for four years.

Over the course of these years, we learned a lot about each other. Ann told me about herself and about how she met and fell in love with her husband. She narrated stories of her

husband and what he had experienced and witnessed during the Second World War. I learned that she had a son whom she rarely saw and whom she missed a lot. It didn't take me long to realize that life had not always been easy for my friend Ann. Despite the difficulties she had faced, she always found the best in people and in situations. She often spoke of the persevering spirit of Helen Keller. I know Helen Keller inspired Ann. In one of our conversations, she quoted Helen Keller as saying, "One should never be content to creep, when one feels the urge to soar."

I know that Ann was never content to creep. She rarely judged, and she could see the beauty in every situation. Living in a hospital room for ten years can dampen the strongest of spirits, but Ann was always smiling when I walked through the door. During our walks she would point out birds, flowers, trees, and insects that, for all my time at the hospital, I had never noticed.

Because of her strong spirit, Ann was a spark of life at the VA and among the other patients. Her love for life and her boundless enthusiasm could set off a cascade of happiness throughout the hospital. I remember one occasion most vividly. It was Valentine's Day, and a rainy, gray one at that. Our volunteer group had planned a dance for the hospital residents. The gloom was obviously affecting the audience, who seemed rather bored and depressed. It was a tough situation. Despite the crooning of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, there were few smiles and even fewer dancers.

Out of the blue, Ann entered room, sopping wet from her afternoon of swim therapy. It was as if Ginger Rogers herself had walked through the door. She started dancing with volunteers and patients alike; soon we'd all succumbed to her infectious cheer and love for life. It turned out to be one of the best days the VA had seen for a long while. Thinking about it now, I can't help but reflect that, when Ann soared, she took everyone along for the ride.



*Standing at Attention*



*Visitors' Welcome*

# He Could Have Been My Father

Nicole Cushman

*"I knew that we were all here to help one another, not to pass judgement"*

Sam was different from the other vets I visited at the VA Hospital. He was younger than my parents. Most of the guys on the geropsychiatry ward were veterans from World War II or the Korean War, or both. Sam served in Vietnam. He was fifty-two, but he looked just as haggard as the oldest vet on the ward. The war and his ensuing alcoholism had aged him far beyond his years. He was there because he suffered from alcohol-induced dementia, and I was told by the hospital staff not to believe much of what he said. I was told his world was the product of hallucinations, and he would probably not remember me from week to week. As it turned out, I was told wrong.

Sam's slurred and often inaudible speech had earned him the nickname "Mr. Mumbles" from the nurses and his fellow patients. By listening closely, however, I could understand him and hear the truth in what he said. Maybe he enhanced the details of his stories from time to time, as any old fisherman is apt to do. But I never doubted his stories of growing up in

the countryside, his estranged ex-wife and two daughters, the war, and his day-to-day life at the VA Hospital. Perhaps it was the sweet tone of his voice that made me believe him, but more than that I think it was the eagerness with which he greeted me each week. He worked hard at remembering my name, and after a year he finally succeeded. He started remembering what we had talked about during my previous visits, and gave me updates to his stories and kept me posted on his medical condition. He knew what classes I was taking at school, when my exams were, and what my boyfriend had been up to lately.

When I entered the VA each week, Sam would spot me from across the room, give a huge wave and a smile, and amble up to me. Sometimes he used a wheelchair, sometimes a walker, and, sometimes, on good days, his own two legs. He often wore a helmet to protect his head in the event of a fall. I really felt for the nurses who had to convince him each morning to put on that helmet.

Sam was a real handful for the nursing staff; he told me so himself. Seeing him from across the room, I could not help but think, "He could be my dad." If my father had not sustained a knee injury while skiing as a teenager, he might very well have seen Vietnam alongside Sam, and who knows what fate would have befallen him during or after the war. Sam and I often played Jeopardy!, just as I do with my father. Sam could rarely come up with the answers, but as soon as I read them off, he was sure to say, "I knew that one." My father does the same thing.

Sam often thanked me for visiting with him. Because he was of a different generation from many of the other veterans, he did not connect well with them. I was the only person he felt comfortable talking to. Strangely, the generation gap between us did not impede our friendship as it did with his ward mates. I never quite understood the depth of his gratitude.

This changed one day when he asked me to bring in some of my schoolwork so he could help me out. At first I laughed, because I knew that he would not understand my organic chemistry homework, but tears came to my eyes when he told me: "I want to help you because you always help

me. Whenever I have health questions or I don't understand a newspaper article or story in National Geographic, you explain it to me. I just want to be able to help you, too."

At that moment I understood that Sam's medical diagnosis was far less important than his spirit. Despite his dementia, he could still appreciate human interaction. I knew then that we are all here to help one another, not to pass judgment. Sam taught me that only deeds done to help other human beings are worth doing, and I remain grateful to him for that lesson.



*Gazebo*

# Simple Advice

Jason Hom

*"As I was leaving, he grasped my hand and held it for what seemed like forever"*

When I reflect upon the time I've spent volunteering at the local Veterans Administration Hospital, two thoughts come to mind. First, I believe that it's the little things that matter when interacting with veterans. Second, I've come to learn that, contrary to what I expected, interacting with veterans is not a one-way, passive endeavor, but rather an opportunity to forge meaningful friendships. Indeed, the patients oftentimes cheer me up more than I cheer them up.

When you see stories about patients in hospitals and rest homes on television and in the movies, you inevitably witness actors experiencing awe-inspiring epiphanies about their lives. In the real world, however, I've learned that the most powerful experiences are often the subtlest.

When I step into the veterans hospital, the sobering reality of life quickly dawns on me: many residents are confined to wheelchairs, depressed, and in need of human contact. They

need volunteers who will listen and show them that there are people who genuinely care. It is these small details- brief eye contact, a smile, a wave, a pat on the back as you walk by- that mean the most. These are the small actions that have the power to make someone's day.

I'll never forget my first visit with a veteran named John. He seemed pretty quiet at first; he lay on the bed and said very little. Gradually, however, John began to talk about his wife, his youth, and his dreams for the future. He also gave me advice. John looked me in the eye and told me "Be sure to read your books" and "Don't forget to go to class." He was trying to help me, and that meant a great deal. As I was leaving the hospital that afternoon, he grasped my hand and held it for what seemed like forever. We didn't say anything; he just grasped my hand. When I left the hospital that day, I was in a really good mood.



*A Jagged Path*



*From the Outside*



*Table and Tower*

# A Great Gift Lives On

Kenny Gundle

*"I wouldn't be surprised if I had run across your uncle at some point during the war"*

For my eighteenth birthday, the summer before I started college, my mother passed down to me the memorial flag and uniform medals of my uncle, Robert E. Wise. Bobby, as mom always called him, died in a helicopter crash while serving in Vietnam. I have always had a special connection to my uncle because, apart from getting my middle name from him, I have grown up loving my country and deeply respecting those who defend and protect America. Through Bobby I came to admire veterans, and it was in no small part in memory of his sacrifice that I started volunteering at a local veterans hospital.

During my second week of volunteering I was outside sitting on a bench, talking with several veterans, when someone I hadn't met came over. He sat down on a chair beside me and introduced himself as Gerry. He was a tall, middle-aged man with glasses and lines on his face that immediately gave him away as someone who had years of experience smiling and laughing. I shook

his well-worked hand and said hello, and for the next hour we chatted about my schooling and all types of sports. We shared an interest in a lot of the same favorite teams, and although I had to leave before we were finished talking, I told him we'd definitely see each other the next week.

I did see Gerry the next week and the one after that. Over the course of the month that followed, we got to know each other quite well. I would look forward to my visits to see him. We would talk, go on walks, and watch sports games on the television at the hospital. One day Gerry and I were outside on the patio catching up on things when, out of the blue, he told me he had been a top student in college. He said that he gave up his scholarship to go to Vietnam. He really felt it was the right choice to go and fight for his country.

I was very touched by what he had said, and I felt an urge to tell him about Bobby. My uncle had wanted

to be a pilot. In college he joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps, where he became a Second Lieutenant. I have a picture of my grandmother pinning on Uncle Bobby's new bars, and he is smiling with a look of complete satisfaction- standing tall with the unmistakable posture of accomplishment. I told Gerry that during the war my uncle had piloted Chinook transport helicopters.

Gerry had been quietly listening to my story. When I mentioned Chinook helicopters, however, he said, "I rode in those things all the time. I wouldn't be surprised if I had run across your uncle at some point during the war." At the time the implications of what I had just heard Gerry tell me didn't really sink in, and he and I continued talking until it was time for me to head back home.

I never had the opportunity to meet my Uncle Bobby- I wish I had. I consider his flag and medals to be the best gifts I have ever received. But every time I go to the veterans hospital, the value of those gifts continues to grow. The closest I've ever felt to my uncle was that day talking with Gerry. The possibility that Gerry may have touched and spoken with my uncle in Vietnam is exceptionally meaningful to me. I firmly believe

that there is a piece of my uncle's spirit in Gerry and in all the veterans I meet. Through my volunteering I see a side of my Uncle Bobby that is alive and wonderful, and that is his service to our country.



**T**O CARE FOR HIM  
WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE  
AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND HIS ORPHAN...

*Abraham Lincoln*

"Above It All" by Sandy Scott  
Donated by David T.D. Conwell

*Freedom*

# The Wall

*Kati Wiloughby*

*"They were giving more to me than they could have possibly known"*

My sense of duty towards our nation's veterans began when I was in middle school. A family trip to Washington, DC culminated in a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At this historic place, the community of veterans present instantly captivated me. I felt moved at the Wall as I watched veterans expressing grief, sympathy, and remembrance. I pulled my parents down the aisles of booths where veterans sold a variety of t-shirts, flags, and bumper stickers. I begged my parents to buy me a POW bracelet since I wanted to maintain some connection to this community and to an experience that had affected me so strongly.

Returning home later that week, I visited the public library and began to read everything I could find on the Vietnam conflict. I read about the fighting conditions, I read about the protests, but most of all I read about the homecoming of the veterans. I felt deeply disturbed and confused by what I read. Our veterans had gone off to war, many involuntarily, and returned home to be vil-

fied and attacked? I was deeply saddened, and decided then that I would try my best in some way to give back to this community that should have received better treatment years before.

While I found a few ways to give back during my high school years, I kept in touch with veterans by educating myself on the issues affecting the population. I wrote letters to the editor regarding the government's treatment of our large veteran population, and I wrote several papers analyzing the policies established by the Veterans Administration. I kept myself involved and passionate, yet still did not feel like I was fulfilling my sense of duty to Vietnam veterans.

Upon entering college, I found my first opportunity to interact with the men and women by whom I had been captivated for so long. Due to my university's proximity to a Veterans Administration Hospital, I was able to participate in an organized student volunteer program to

visit the patients. I was excited to join and form relationships with the men and women in the hospital, but even more importantly, I was eager to hear the stories they had to tell. After reading the academic literature on the subject, I felt very fortunate to actually meet the people who had lived through the experience.

On one of my first trips to the hospital I met a Vietnam veteran who was in very good spirits. We began to talk about his experiences in Vietnam, and when I expressed interest in hearing his stories he lit up and shuffled off to his room. He returned with a folded paper, which he told me to read. The paper contained an emotionally charged account of a particular experience in Vietnam when he and his men were under enemy fire. I had read so many similar accounts in faceless books, yet after reading this account I could look into the author's eyes and talk to him about the experience. While I had volunteered at the VA to give back to the veterans, they were actually giving more to me than they could have possibly known.

I continue to volunteer weekly at the VA, listening to some veterans talk about their families, playing cards with others, or writing letters for those that can no longer write. I try

to express my gratitude to them in little ways, hoping they see how much I respect their sacrifice for our nation and how sorry I am that many did not receive a proper homecoming. And yet, while my desire to give back to these veterans is enough to motivate me to keep going, what truly excites me is the anticipation of the stories they will share. They tell stories ranging from the pain of losing a friend in the attack on Pearl Harbor or the joy of returning home to families. It is an amazing, wondrous history lesson, presented in full living detail.



*First of Spring*

# Reflections of a Hero

Andre D. Vanier

*"Too many lives lost, too many crosses.  
With time comes healing, but the memories still linger."*

You mean you volunteered to go to Vietnam?

I listened intently as Greg continued to speak. His fiery red hair framed his long face and intense blue eyes. I watched him from across a table in the brightly lit social area of the VA Hospital. His lanky 6 foot 4 inch frame towered over me.

*I did.*

Why?

*It seems like a long time ago, but I remember it clearly. I was a sophomore at the University of Washington, there on a football scholarship. It was 1965, and I took a political science class with Dr. Ngyuen, a Vietnam exile. He shared with us his firsthand experiences of communist atrocities and of the persecution of Catholics and Buddhists. I was young and idealistic at the time, and I wanted to make a difference. My football coach, Jim Owens, was all in favor of me going. My teammates and I called him 'God'*

*because that's how he seemed to us. A Silver Star medallist from Korea, he encouraged all the football players to volunteer for Vietnam. And many of us did.*

Greg stopped to slice the chicken breast on the plastic tray of his dinner plate. He placed a straw into the cardboard milk container and took a long sip. He had lost twenty-five pounds since I had first met him almost a year ago. The ravages of cancer and chemotherapy had decimated his appetite. It was good to see him eating with enthusiasm.

*I made the decision with full clarity. And yet it wasn't easy. My mother was quite worried. I was adopted you see, her only child. She had raised me as her own son from when I was just six weeks old. And the bond between us was so strong. It still is. My mom is 85, and she still worries about me.*

So you just left everything behind?

*Yes. And that year I had been invit-*

*ed to training camps by the Raiders, 49ers, St. Louis and Dallas. I only had three quarters left to graduate. I think the moment I really decided was when some of my buddies, like Joe Merek who was already over there, came back during their time off. I recall a big meeting with ten or so of my teammates and friends. Joe stood up and said to me, "Brotha, we need someone with a big mouth to go over to Vietnam and make things better. And brotha, you got one!"*

Listening to Greg speak was wonderfully easy and at the same time very painful. It was a pleasure to hear Greg's stentorian voice and imagine how the events of his life had unfolded thirty-five years ago. As a student, however, it was difficult to understand his decision to leave school and even harder to comprehend the gravity of the world he would soon be entering.

*After basic training in Fort Louis Washington and Advance Training for officers, I was headed for Vietnam. I was just 21 years old, a 3rd Platoon Leader, in charge of the lives of twenty-five men. In just a couple months, I was promoted to Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, US Army E Company.*

I knew Greg had a strong belief in God, and I knew how much his

Catholic faith meant to him. I started to ask him how religion had helped him persevere as a young officer. Before I could speak, however, he answered my question. It was as if he had read my mind.

*Andre, you're Catholic too, so you'll appreciate this. I used to write letters to the parents of my men. I would tell them 'I am doing everything in my power to keep your son safe. Pray for him, pray for us and pray for me.' I would get lots of letters back, sometimes cookies as well. And some of the men would write to my mother as well!*

Greg paused to open a small Jell-O container the nurse had brought him.

*You know, if I ever make it out of here, I want to become a Franciscan brother. Not a priest, you understand, I don't have the patience to sit through five more years of classes. But I could be a brother, a member of the Franciscan community. When I can, I go to Mass here at the VA. And there's so much more I want to do. Father James, the VA chaplain, has me accompany him on his rounds visiting sick patients.*

I felt a quiet moment of inspiration. For all of his infirmities and the pain of cancer, Greg had found the strength to comfort other patients.

He was a volunteer himself!

*Vietnam made me very, very sick, and it wasn't just being a prisoner of war. Actually I was a POW twice. The first time, in Cambodia, and again at the so-called Hanoi Hilton. I would have rotted there if it hadn't been for the Amnesty International sponsored officer exchange. It was hard, I'm sure you can guess. Still, it took more than the imprisonment to make me sick. Seeing my men lose their lives, and participating in hand to hand combat, left me deeply traumatized.*

Greg finished the Jell-O, paused for a moment, and resumed.

*After the war I took a job at John Deere, selling tractors. I thought things were back to normal. I was married, had two beautiful little sons. One with red hair like me. But then there were moments when I knew I wasn't over it. Once, for work, I visited Arlington Virginia, to see the National Cemetery. Seeing the rolling hills of little white crosses left me devastated. Too many lives lost, too many crosses. With time comes healing, but the memories still linger.*

I knew that Greg had come back from Vietnam a hero with sixteen medals, including two silver stars, one bronze medal and two purple

hearts. He had left for Vietnam 248 lbs with a 34 waist and returned 140 pounds with a 28 waist. I also knew that Greg had spent months in the Menlo Park VA's program for post-traumatic stress disorder. I had read that this condition affected many Vietnam veterans. Now, I understood why.

My visits with Greg over the course of this past year have provided me with a window into a different era. Hearing his perspectives on war, faith and suffering, have afforded me a deeper understanding of the sacrifices undertaken by so many of our nation's veterans. Seeing Greg's struggle with both the physical afflictions of the present and mental anguish of the past has helped me appreciate the preciousness of peace and the very human emotions of our men and women in uniform. I remain grateful for my friendship with Greg and for the innumerable ways in which my time volunteering has enriched my own life experience.



*Golden Gate Vista*



*Lines*



*Midnight Lights*

# Real People

Manisha Bahl

*"We began doing this every week and it was then that my weekly visits gained meaning and purpose."*

It wasn't the fact that John didn't remember my name- it was the fact that he couldn't remember me. He didn't remember that I had visited him one week ago, that we had talked about his family and his career, that we had laughed about a movie I had watched, or that we had discussed recent world events. I had entered John's life and he had entered mine- and yet he couldn't remember.

In high school, like every other student interested in medicine, I volunteered at a local hospital. There, I delivered specimens to the laboratory, answered general questions, decorated the pediatrics ward for the holidays, and directed visitors. Rarely, however, did I communicate with patients. So in college, when I heard about an opportunity to volunteer at the local VA, I was eager to spend time with the hospitalized veterans. Little did I know that volunteering at the VA Hospital would change my life. It was there that I first met John.

In the beginning, I never knew where or how to begin. Should I reintroduce myself and start afresh? Or should I pick up where we had left off the previous week? I didn't feel like John and I were forging a real relationship, nor did I feel that I was helping John in any substantial way. All the same, he was always eager to share his life experiences with me, so I continued visiting him. I'm glad I did because I eventually came to terms with the fact that John was a person suffering from a debilitating disease.

As I continued visiting John every week, our relationship improved. At first, we only talked about his family and education, but eventually he began sharing with me his war experiences, his fears, and his anxieties. Sometimes John talked happily about his family and career; on other visits, he seemed depressed and withdrawn. John regularly expressed his discomfort with life in the dementia ward, spending his days with patients who were much weaker,

both physically and mentally, than he was. The fact that John was suffering profoundly disturbed me, and I felt powerless to help, despite the hospital's assurance that John would soon leave the hospital and move in with his family.

\* \* \*

Michael was another patient I visited. He was difficult from the very beginning. Suffering from schizophrenia, Michael was not as communicative as John. In fact, during my first few visits, Michael barely acknowledged my presence, making me feel like he was beyond my reach. I gave up on verbal interaction and started massaging his hands while we listened to music. Eventually he began responding to some of my questions. When a nurse suggested that I try sensory stimulation, I showed Michael various objects and asked him to describe them to me. Once, I held up a canteen and waited in anticipation to see if it would catch Michael's attention. His eyes opened more fully and then he whispered, "Canteen ... in the war." I was heartened by his response and continued with the other items provided in the sensory stimulation box. We began doing this every week and it was then that my weekly visits gained meaning and purpose.

I realize now that it was a mistake to think of volunteering as a one-way process. While John and Michael may look forward to seeing me, I equally anticipated our moments together. John and Michael have shared with me a great deal about themselves. Their life stories have made me reflect on my own beliefs and perspectives. Through this experience, I have met individuals who suffer and yet demonstrate real courage. There is never a day that I return from the VA Hospital without a new take on life and a new experience to share with others.



*The Approach*

# Anything But Routine

Matt Bricker

*"I was floored and shocked. And he just didn't let go."*

*These are excerpts from the journal of volunteer Matt Bricker. Matt has been volunteering at a VA Hospital for 3 years and has visited many different veterans. His words describe the daily experiences of a volunteer.*

Today I visited with Fred for the longest time in quite a while. His personal caretaker wasn't there today, so he was alone. He was eager to see me and was very responsive, so I made the decision to spend all my time with him that day since he isn't usually so active. He promptly asked me to sit down with him at the table and then inquired as to whether or not he could get something to drink. "A Coca-Cola," he suggested. I asked the nurse, and she went to check his file. She returned to say that he isn't allowed to drink soda, but that he could definitely have some juice. I said that I would appreciate it if she could get some for him and she brought a little Dixie cup full of apple juice. As Fred sat with his legs crossed in his wheelchair holding his juice, he would've looked odd to most anyone. But to

me, he looked like a distinguished old gentleman, sitting in a country club, sipping a fine brandy. As he finished his juice and asked for more, I smiled the cutest, most earnest college-boy smile I could muster and somehow charmed the nurse into getting me another cupful. She chuckled and shook her head slightly as she left her workstation to fulfill my request. When the second juice was finished, Fred complained that he was a little cold, so I got him another shirt from his barren closet since all he was wearing was a thin V-neck sweater. I helped him put it on and he quickly said, "Hey. Go for a walk." I said sure and glanced out the window- I frowned as I noticed that it was getting misty and a bit chilly. I thought about what to do as I helped Fred put the sweater back on. I was a bit nervous that he would get wet and cold, but I decided that since it wasn't outright raining and I had him pretty well bundled up that there wasn't a good reason to refuse his request. Still, when we got outside the VA, I grabbed the umbrella from my truck and gave it

to him to hold, if only to make me feel a little better. I also grabbed an old blanket and put it over his head and around his shoulders. I mused that I had become part of Fred's odd little spectacle now, as anyone looking at the two of us aimlessly walking about the VA campus would've found us strange. A bundled up old man holding a flowered umbrella being wheeled slowly by a shivering twenty year old who had forgotten to make sure that he himself was warm enough would appear odd to most anyone. But I didn't care. This was the first time in two years that Fred and I had gotten so much time together. The first time in two years that he felt well enough to talk to me let alone go for a walk. It was the first time in two years that I remember him being comfortable. The day was gray and misty, but to me it was nothing but sunshine.

\* \* \*

Today I decided to visit John. John suffers from severe dementia and usually ignores volunteers. If you are lucky, and he recognizes your face, he will let you touch his shoulder and will sometimes say either "Oh yes," or "Mmhmm." But today, he was being uncharacteristically responsive. He talked more than usual and nodded when I asked him if he felt alright. Suddenly, in an unprecedented-

ed move, he shook my hand. I was floored. And he just didn't let go. He grabbed my hand and walked me all around the ward, finally settling in front of the fish tank where we gazed at the fish for half an hour. I asked him if he liked the fish and he nodded his head and said clearly, "Yes, sir." I said I did too. That was the last word that was spoken for the duration of the time I spent with John. We just stood there, him grasping my hand and peering intently into the fish tank. But nothing needed to be said. I was overjoyed that reclusive John had found it in his heart to trust me enough to stand still and hold my hand. You have five, ten, fifty ordinary visits with a person in the hopes that you get a moment like this where you know that you have really touched their day, their life. And at the moment when I realized that I had done this for John, I realized that he had done the same for me.

\* \* \*

Today I brought a friend to the hospital with me. We talked to one of the vets I visit, Stanley, for a while. Although our conversation was relatively run of the mill, what hit me today was watching my friend interact with the veterans. His slight nervousness and the awkward nature of his interaction with them made me

think back to when I started volunteering. I remembered never knowing what to say to someone who didn't remember me. At that time, I didn't know anything about any of the guys in the entire room. I used to be uncomfortable when one of them would touch my shoulder or grab my wrist. I remember having that what-the-heck-is-going-on look in my eyes. Suddenly, I became thankful that my visits were "routine." I was thankful that I knew about things like Stanley's time as a Management Engineer in the Air Force, his two sons, his love of jazz and his hearing problem.

I nudged my way into the conversation to help out my friend. I asked a couple of leading questions and directed "ol' Stan" to a point in the conversation where he was comfortable on his own. My friend looked decidedly more comfortable too. As both of them settled down, it struck me that this is what it's all about, why I come at all: for people. Simply put, at the veterans hospital I get to witness people talking to people, remembering what it means to be human, and showing compassion and love to someone else for no other reason except that they are human too. And that is anything but routine.

\* \* \*

Today was a good, relaxing day at the VA. I sat outside and chatted with two of the vets I often see on my weekly visits. We talked about the other vets, the staff, the weather, this and that. It wasn't so much what we talked about, as much as the simple fact that we were talking so freely, immersed in our own world. I listened to them and lost myself in their reality- I forgot my problems and they forgot their boredom. The sun was shining, there wasn't a cloud in the sky and we laughed and joked for nearly two hours. The most unusual part about the whole experience was the fact that it seemed absolutely normal. That is a rare feeling for me, being a typical always-busy college student. And it's most certainly rare for the patients who can usually only trace their memories for glimpses of normalcy. That's why it felt so good to have a normal moment there, in the sun, talking with two of the best friends I'll ever have.



*Study in Circles*



*Entry and Squares*

# A Link to the World

Larisa Sotinsky Speetzen

*"His creativity could not be contained by the hospital walls..."*

Four years ago, when I first met Charlie, I entered his room feeling apprehensive. I knew that Charlie had placed a request with the hospital staff for a volunteer who was Native American and interested in art. I'm not Native American and my last artistic attempts had been with finger paints, but because of volunteer shortages at the hospital, we were paired up anyway. I knew I wasn't going to live up to Charlie's expectations, and I wondered from the start if he would still care to visit with me. Our conversation was awkward at first, but after a while we began talking about my home state of Arizona. My uncle works on a reservation in Arizona, and I had visited places Charlie was familiar with. I think Charlie realized that, although he and I didn't have much in common, I had a keen interest in listening and learning from him. At the end of our first visit, Charlie reached under his hospital bed and handed me a drawing. The delicate pencil sketch of an exhausted Native American warrior hunched over on his horse surprised me. An enormous

amount of skill was apparent in the picture. My eyes traced the lines of the mesa and cacti in the background and I felt, for a moment, transported to Arizona. "A gift for you, I drew this." Charlie said with a shy grin. This was a gift unlike any other I had ever received. Upon returning to my college dorm, I showed the drawing to my friends, beaming like a proud six-year-old.

In our subsequent visits, I discovered the depth of Charlie's artistic skill. I saw how his creativity could not be contained by the hospital walls, his wheelchair, or his inability to visit the neighborhood art store. Charlie had to find inspiration in his surroundings at the hospital. Small tree branches were one of his favorite mediums. He chose branches that were "interesting looking". He liked the ones that divided repeatedly like the arms of a saguaro cactus. Charlie painted hundreds of stripes of color to encircle the wood. He transformed tree branches from cleanup work for the hospital maintenance crew into col-

orful art that adorned the walls of his room. A few of Charlie's tree branches have come to decorate my walls over the years. Friends often comment on their unexpected beauty.

Charlie also painted large and brightly colored pictures of men and women from his tribe, the Cheyenne. He painted them dancing in ceremonial clothes or dressed as warriors. At a certain point, Charlie began "throwing paint" over his pictures, like Jackson Pollock. During this time, I saw figures emerge from beneath hundreds of tiny spots of paint launched from Charlie's brush. Even now, when I look at these paintings, I notice new details that I hadn't appreciated before. I have learned to be patient with my gaze.

In a way, my visits with Charlie changed the way I viewed a lot of things. I became much more aware of the urge to create. In college, I had grown accustomed to being surrounded by students with talent for innovation and creativity. Seeing this same spirit in the veterans hospital was unexpected. Many people would say that a hospital room is a bleak, impersonal space. Charlie transformed his into a remarkable gallery. His creativity leapt off the walls and was a testament to his strong spirit. Charlie and I talked often about spirit; he said it was the fuel for his cre-

ativity. Because of him, I learned how important it is to take care of your spirit. Charlie nurtured his with Native American religion and history.

Charlie burnt sage every morning and afternoon in the hospital courtyards. He placed the sweet-smelling leaves in an abalone shell and used a lighter to kindle a small flame. Charlie told me that this was a Cheyenne cleansing ritual. After a few visits, Charlie invited me to burn sage with him. As I inhaled the perfume of the leaves, Charlie told me stories about his life. It was as though the sweet aroma transported him away from the hospital back to his home state of Oklahoma. It transported him to his youth when he was an ardent activist.

In the 1970s he walked across the United States from San Francisco to Washington DC in a mass protest of the poor conditions on reservations and to call attention to treaty violations. I liked hearing about the long journey and the spiritual strength that motivated each step. I also learned about Charlie's family and his great-grandfather, White Horse, who was a leader of the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers. In school, we studied a lot of Native American history because Arizona has many reservations. I always paid attention, but as with much of history, these lessons

seemed irrelevant to my own life. This changed when I met Charlie. The history he told was vibrant and alive. I could understand how his history shaped his life and gave him the strength to persevere. Living in a hospital room must not seem quite so formidable after you've traveled three thousand miles on foot.

Charlie also made a constant effort to keep his mind active. Reading was one of his favorite pastimes. In four years, I have probably checked out more books from my college library for Charlie than I have for myself! His favorites included Kesey's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea". Books were usually the first things we talked about in our visits. At the beginning of each session Charlie placed his requests for the next week, and I gathered the books that he was finished with. At first, I was amazed when Charlie requested books. I had assumed that because his body was sick, his mind would be too.

This was not the case. Charlie's art, his stories, his deep spirituality, and his passion for books all testified to an alert and active mind. For all his talents, however, Charlie needed a link with the outside world. He needed a young mind to listen and learn. He was eager to pass along his spiri-

tual lessons. He needed someone to bring him books. As a volunteer at the VA, I was lucky enough to be Charlie's link to the outside world. I am forever grateful that I didn't shy away from the opportunity. Although I wasn't what Charlie was expecting, we found our common ground and, together, we built a solid friendship.



*Spring Blossoms*



*Angle of Repose*



*Corner Geometry*

# Unexpected Gratitude

Jackie Hoang

*"Nothing could have prepared me for the day Jim told me he had been diagnosed with cancer."*

When I started volunteering at a veterans hospital in college, I was faced with the unexpected. In high school, I had volunteered at a hospital, but this experience did not involve much interaction between patients and volunteers. I spent most of my time at the information desk, stuffing envelopes, transporting lab specimens, and discharging patients. The only opportunity I had to interact with patients was wheeling them from their rooms to the hospital entrance. In these brief moments, there was hardly any time to talk, let alone form any sort of meaningful relationships.

My time volunteering at a VA was completely different. Here, the experience was about forming personal relationships with veterans. I hoped that I would become both a companion and friend to the hospital residents. However, because I am typically shy, I had no idea if I could muster the courage to approach complete strangers just to talk.

Jim, a patient at the VA, made my

transition from clerical duties to patient interaction especially easy. During volunteer orientation, I learned that some veterans might not be very responsive because of their medical conditions. Jim, however, always greeted me with a smile and an enthusiastic handshake. He was always eager to talk about our families, his college days, and my life at college. In our carefree chats, I often forgot that Jim was sick. At the end of our visits, I expected him to follow me out to the parking lot and speed off in a sporty red coupe.

Nothing could have prepared me for the day Jim told me he had been diagnosed with cancer. I noticed that his moods became more unpredictable. Some days the beaming face I had grown to expect was replaced with a dark, somber expression. Jim explained to me how his plans for the future were now influenced by pain and doubt. I tried to assure him that everything would be all right, but it was frustrating to see him go through so much pain. I heard the fear and

sadness in his voice, but I felt powerless to help him.

Watching Jim fight his illness made me realize that my life had been quite happy and sheltered. Nothing as bad as cancer had ever happened to anyone in my family or me. I had only faced minor difficulties like unfair exams, boyfriend drama, and occasional squabbles with my parents. I realized how fortunate I was to have such minor concerns. Jim exposed me to the fact that people everywhere are stricken with adversity, and despite it all, they persevere in their daily lives. Furthermore, I also learned from the way my feelings of helplessness began to subside as I continued to visit Jim. While I couldn't stop the cancer that was in his body, I could help his spirit garner the strength to fight it. Jim's smile comes less frequently now that he's ill. However, when his grin emerges from the pain, I realize how lucky I am to be with this man when he needs simple, human comfort the most.

Initially I wasn't able to form a comfortable relationship with the other veteran I was assigned to visit, Alfred. He was a small man who was remarkably adept at maneuvering his wheelchair around the ward. This ability made him seem younger than he was, and I expected him to be eager to talk. As a result, I was surprised that

our conversations were simple at best. We talked about my classes, the weather, or we watched television together. Sometimes, Alfred didn't feel like talking. On those days, I felt very uncertain and uncomfortable with my hospital work. I began to worry that, far from making a difference in Alfred's life, I was pestering him.

Alfred showed me that my fears were unfounded. One day, just as I was about to leave, he steered his wheelchair in front of the hospital exit. He was blocking me from leaving! After clearing his throat, Alfred thanked me for coming to see him. He said that although he didn't always feel like talking, he always looked forward to our visits. I stood there, completely stunned to hear these words come out of Alfred. He swiveled quickly in his wheelchair, and with a wave, he disappeared into his room. We continue to visit every week. I know now that he enjoys the time we spend together. It is that simple fact that makes me feel incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to volunteer. After my experiences at the VA, I've come to believe that making another person happy is the most important thing anyone can do. The enormous opportunity to positively affect veterans' lives is what keeps me going back to the VA every week. Not only do I enjoy the time I spend with the patients, I also learn about myself and about life.



*Behind the Scene*

# Eddie

Sarita Patil

*"None of us is simple, and none of us lives a simple life. Eddie was no exception."*

When I first walked from the beautiful greenery outside the VA to the narrow hallways lined with slightly yellowing tiling and low ceilings, I felt a sense of cold, aseptic deterioration. Age and illness seemed to be embedded in the building. Here, time seemed to pass in very slow motion. The veterans ambled around slowly, passing time by sitting outside, listening to music, or playing games.

In many ways, the VA was alien to me. I felt as if a gulf existed between the veterans and myself. We came from different walks of life, had different interests, and were in different stages of life. All that changed when I met Eddie.

Eddie was a fighter. He was severely diabetic with a double amputation of his legs, and he was on chronic dialysis. The doctors had only given him a few weeks to live, but he had held fast, and the weeks had turned into months. He loved to talk and hang out with the other veterans. We often spent hours talking about his life. He had been a karate teacher in Hawaii

before his health problems, and he carefully explained the principles of karate, and his ideas about respect to self-defense. Eddie would also share his knowledge about the world and Hawaii, in particular. I would become so absorbed by our conversations that time would fly by.

I soon became like a daughter to Eddie. He had two teenage daughters of his own, and occasionally he would mistake me for them. With his failing eyesight and my long black hair, it was an easy mistake to make. But Eddie took his role as a paternal figure very seriously. He would ask me about my life and look out for me on the wards, warning me against the dangers of men. As time went on, he also began to confide more of his feelings to me. Some days were good, others were bad. Most of all though, Eddie needed someone with whom he could have emotional contact. Without his family, who rarely visited him, Eddie seemed lonely and anchorless.

Eddie was not a saint. Although he

was paternal and caring with me, his clashes with nurses and even his family were frequent. His mood swings were unpredictable, and he had a quick temper. I learned to forgive him, however. As humans, we are the sum of conflicting and incompatible qualities. None of us is simple, and none of us lives a simple life. Eddie was no exception. I cared for the sum total of Eddie, bad and good.

Losing Eddie was unexpected and difficult. At the very moment I learned of Eddie's death, I realized I had expected him to fight forever. Now that he was gone, there was a vast gap in my life. Eddie taught me many things, but the lesson that will live on the longest in my heart was his lesson on the human need for others. The gulf I had perceived between the veterans and myself was only in my head. We were so much the same on basic levels: we all need human contact with others. People are not solitary; we find our strength from each other.

I will always derive strength from my memories of Eddie. Not just because we had fun discussing karate and Hawaii, but because of the enduring friendship we established in the face of vast differences and obstacles. I will always be humbled by the fact that small acts of kindness can mean so much.



*Park and City*



*Autumn Wind*

# Still Life

Trevor Sutton

*"When I saw our masterpiece, faded and distorted after months of neglect, I could only smile."*

Building 450 of the Veterans Administration Hospital was a low-slung, brick structure shaded by conifers and the occasional eucalyptus. A sidewalk ran along the perimeter and shutterless windows lined the exterior walls. Across the street was a well-tended island of grass, and beyond that a spare, white-walled chapel with a steeple and a weathervane. To the right and left were parking lots, and in back was a small park dotted with picnic tables. There was a pleasantly utilitarian feel to the grounds: calm, clean, predictable.

The silence, however, was unsettling. The area near Building 450 was devoid of human activity. No bikes cruised the streets, no children played in the lawn, no couples strolled beneath the cherry trees. The hush was punctuated only by the passing of the occasional car. The tranquility seemed stultifying. I couldn't imagine that people lived here. It was like a museum.

So it was no small relief when, each week, I crossed the threshold of

Building 450 and passed into its bare corridors of white-yellow tiles and fluorescent lamps. I could smell bleach and cigarette smoke, and hear the mechanical whir of wheelchairs and clanging pots and pans. I saw human beings: doctors, nurses, recreation therapists, janitors, cooks, receptionists, volunteers, and, of course, patients, some of whom waved while others ambled by without a glance. Beyond the foyer, in A Ward, veterans congregated around the television, played checkers, listened to music, smoked, ate, and slept. Behind the ward, halfway down a residential hallway, was Paul's room.

Paul was usually asleep when I arrived. Either that or he was enjoying the sun streaming through the window with his eyes closed. I was never sure. Paul was in his early seventies. He was frail with white hair and white eyebrows. His voice was raspy. His fingers were wrinkly and gaunt. He had been in a band and still owned a guitar. He had worked in a chemical plant in the Bay

Area. He had fought in the Second World War. He had children and grandchildren. He had met Ms. California a few years back and had the photo to prove it. He liked to paint. He suffered from clinical depression. He had end-stage pancreatic cancer. He was half-deaf. You had to yell when you said anything to him. He slept a lot.

"Paul," I used to say, "Have you been doing any painting since last time?" He was usually startled. "No," he always said, "but I did some drawing." We liked to paint together. For several months we worked on a seascape in the men's shower of C Ward. Every Wednesday, on the nose, I arrived with brushes, stencil outlines of fish and plant life and several tins of oilpaints in "tropical" colors. Normally I met Paul outside his room, at which point we trekked over to the other side of the hospital, where the nurses had set up a small workstation across from the linoleum expanse we called our canvas. Paul then filled our two mixing bowls with water, moistened his brush, and began the long process of finding the exact shade of turquoise-green for the kelp bed. We were painting on the grout and tile that skirted the shower walls. Meanwhile, I was streaking the ochre angelfish near the hot-water faucet with wavy lines of pink and orange.

Most of the time the painting was

great fun. Sometimes, however, Paul was in a dark mood. The nurses told me not to be surprised by the symptoms of depression or alarmed by the ravages of cancer. I did my best. It was difficult as we got close to finishing our project. Paul began having trouble walking and became visibly flustered when his hearing gave out entirely. At that point, we had to communicate by writing messages on his sketch-pad. Still- amazingly- he never missed an appointment. By late May, before the spring semester was over, the painting was finished.

The final product was far from perfect. Some of the fish had become warped and faded over the course of many showers. The jellyfish never amounted to much more than grey-pink blobs. A long dribble of orange paint extended down from a lopsided starfish, through a striped seahorse down into the kelp-bed and ultimately onto the shower floor. Still, I- we- were proud. The staff and many of the other patients complimented our work. I knew it pleased Paul, although sometimes it was hard to tell. He had begun sleeping all day, and even when conscious his conversation seemed dulled by his pain medication.

When I left for summer break, Paul and I agreed we would begin a new project that autumn. I suggested a desert vista on the wall adjacent to the

television in A ward. He was more interested in a tropical forest in the corridor between his room and the dining hall. We agreed to resolve the matter when I got back. He vowed to keep his skills honed by sketching portraits of his friends and family over the summer months. He drew one of me at our last scheduled visit in June. I still keep it in a drawer at home, along with other poignant memories of my years as a volunteer.

When I arrived at school in September, I learned that Paul had passed on during the summer. I had feared as much, but I still found myself unprepared. I couldn't bear to return to the VA for about a month. I had visions of his room-empty, or perhaps newly occupied with a different patient-and of paint tins and brushes sitting unused in the cabinet in the staff lounge. These thoughts alone were distressing. The real thing, I imagined, would be too much to bear.

There came a time, however, when I decided enough was enough. I got in my car and drove the familiar route to the VA. As I pulled into the parking lot of Building 450, my anxiety peaked. It was serene yet intimidating like I remembered it. As I exited my car and I approached the front doorway I felt a quiet surge of confidence. There were, I remembered, many things I loved about the being a volunteer. I passed

through the doorway, and discovered the same smells, sights and sounds I had grown to relish over the course of the previous year. Once again, like before, I crossed through the foyer, turned left into A ward, paused a moment to watch the veterans crowded in front of the television, traversed the ward lounge and opened the door to the men's shower. When I saw our masterpiece, faded and distorted after months of neglect, I could only smile. Our seascape was more than ornamentation: it was a reminder that life had been here, that two people had spent days and days putting brush to tile because they loved life and because they wanted to make the world a touch more beautiful. Ten years from now there would be new patients in the hospital. And although some of the nurses would remain, they would probably not remember the names of the two people who painted the fish and kelp and seahorses on the yellow-white linoleum in the far-left corner of the men's restroom. Still, they would know that someone, at some point, had cared enough to leave a testament of love in the form of a half-eroded fresco of plants and animals. I knew Paul would have shared my enthusiasm had he been there with me. He would have agreed that deeds live on forever even if people do not. That lesson, I believe, is something every veteran holds dear in his heart.



*Trees at Dusk*



*Solace*

“To care for him who  
shall have borne the  
battle and for his widow  
and his orphan.”

*Abraham Lincoln*

# Afterword

Students wrote the essays in this book. Like all youth, the authors lead busy lives. And yet, they have each decided to volunteer in VA hospitals. They have contributed their time, energy, and compassion to the men and women who have served our country. Their words detail the powerful bonds that can be forged between volunteers and veterans. These stories tell how they have learned and changed from visiting veterans. The stories also show how volunteering can assuage the deep pain of loneliness suffered by many of these patients. In sum, these stories are portraits of human connections. They depict bonds between old and young. They demonstrate how people from different walks of life can find common ground with each other.

As you move on after reading this book, I encourage you to hear the call to service that is resonating from the halls of VA hospitals across the nation. The students in this book have answered this call, but there is so much more the youth of America can do. Veterans need young people to listen to them, learn from them, and link them to the outside world. I encourage you to contact your local VA hospital or the VA Voluntary Service Office ([www.va.gov/volunteer](http://www.va.gov/volunteer)), or get involved with a student group like United Students for Veterans' Health ([www.usvh.org](http://www.usvh.org)). You will not be turned away if you bring an open mind and kind heart to a VA hospital. You will realize that you can make a great impact simply by showing up and sharing a smile.

This publication would not have been possible without the support of Jim Delgado, Director of the VA Office for Voluntary Service, and Laura Balun. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Clinton Chan for memorializing the campuses of VA hospitals with his dramatic photography. I am grateful to Lisa Rutherford for the design of the project, and to Trevor Sutton for layout and technical management. The United Students for Veterans' Health Board of Directors also played a key role in supporting the project. And special thanks to Vance and Andre Vanier for their leadership and creative vision throughout this endeavor.

Thank you for reading these essays. I hope they have changed how you perceive the veterans and youth of our country. Please don't let your involvement with the VA medical system end as you close this book. Get involved. Soon you will have your own essay to write.

*Larisa Sotinsky Speetzen*

*National Director, United Students for Veterans' Health*



# About the Photographer

Clinton Chan, M.D., originally from Singapore, is a student at the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University in California. An avid photographer, he works mostly in medium and large formats. For the 'Living Memories' project, he used a 1960's Rolleiflex Twin Lens Reflex camera to take full advantage of the square format of the photos featured in this book. Clinton is currently working on a project for the Singapore Art Museum and on a series of country landscapes of Singapore. An extended collection of his works can be found on his website at [www.clintonchan.freesevers.com](http://www.clintonchan.freesevers.com)





